

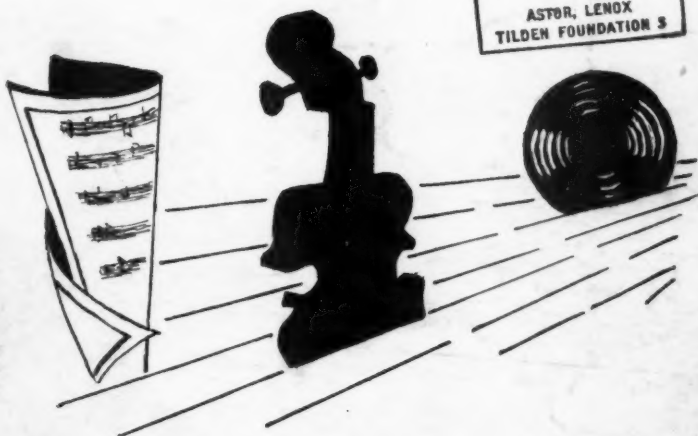
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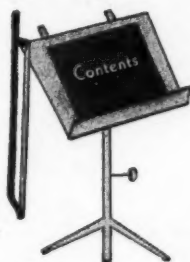
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# The American RECORD GUIDE

April 1948 ▲ Vol. XIV, No. 8

formerly THE AMERICAN MUSIC LOVER



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## Editorial Notes

### On Record Surfaces

We receive letters constantly complaining about the quality of record surfaces these days. A careful survey of correspondence reveals wide difference of opinion, and the general complaint does not limit itself to one manufacturer. Many record buyers contend that the actual life of modern discs is far less than that of pre-war days. One correspondent writes: "I believe many reviewers may not be aware of how records wear in these times. The wear is established by constant 'living' with a recording, something—I should think—unfamiliar to critics who have to listen to such a vast number of records each month. If they were to play some recent domestic discs, I have acquired, more than 10 times, I believe they might discover some surprising results. I have had records turn a very noticeable gray in color after a dozen plays with a resultant distortion of reproduction and a horrible increase in surface sound."

There may be many reviewers who do not find the time to play their records a dozen times in as many months. However, most of us associated with this magazine have played many recent releases 10 or more times in a shorter period of time and found no reason to complain about increasing surface sound. The inference might be drawn that reviewers receive preferred pressings, but this we can disprove.

Some or most of the poor record wear these days is traceable to the so-called permanent needle. It must be realized that there is no permanent needle—not even the diamond. Shortly, we will print some information on jewel points giving results of laboratory tests made at one of the leading technological institutes in the East. The market is flooded with long-playing needles, most of which are guaranteed to be permanent. Experiments, however, have proved that the non-wearing life of most of these needles is scarcely a tenth of the number of plays advertised and guaranteed. From our varied correspondence, we have definitely determined that the principal causes of record wear are—the over-use of so-called permanent needles, poorly aligned pickups, and faulty changer operation. We have elaborated on this previously. Each complainant assumes that his problem is the prevailing condition, but investigation has proved otherwise.

(Continued on page 238)



## SIR THOMAS BEECHAM TALKS ON RECORDING

In an Interview with the Editor

▲After conducting his new orchestra, the Royal Philharmonic, three hundred times in eighteen months, Sir Thomas Beecham sailed for this country toward the end of January for a brief and much needed holiday. During the period that the distinguished conductor was in New York, I had the privilege of visiting several times with him and his wife—the genial and talented pianist, Betty Beecham. Sir Thomas freely discussed various aspects of music and played many of his new recordings.

The extent of Sir Thomas' recordings in the past twelve months is comparable to the ever popular and much demanded band leaders—an indisputable feat for a leading exponent of the classics. He has made in all some 226 sides, representing forty different works. The noted conductor's enthusiasm and animation belie his years, and his en-

ergies are indefatigable. His plans for the future should prove this.

RCA Victor on February 2, in its Johnnie Victor Theater in New York, gave a party for a group of critics at which time Sir Thomas played several parts of his new recordings of *The Messiah* and the works of Delius, which Victor released last month. He subsequently spoke with fervor and affection on the music. In his responses to the many questions asked, he revealed a sparkling wit which reminded one of the irresistible humor of George Bernard Shaw. Asked what he thought of the record ban imposed by Mr. Petrillo, he said:

"I profess to have no true understanding of this curtailment of recording. People in America are said to love recorded music. Surely, what they love, they need and want. I am told that there are close to 140,000,000

people in your country. It is a strange state of affairs when one man can deprive so many of something they like and all of these 140,000,000 people calmly sit back and accept the mandate of this one man. In England, the voice of the people would have been loud in protest."

Replying to the question whether his new orchestra was subsidized by the present Government in England, he stated: "Good gracious, no! Were this the case we would be told what to do and probably what to play. Gentlemen, let us enjoy the little liberty we have left!"

Later, discussing his new orchestra, Sir Thomas gave his reasons for its formation. "I wanted, above all," he said, "an instrument that would be entirely subject to my interest as a musician, an instrument composed of first-class players but which, as a unit, would accept everything I wished to do unembarrassed by association over a lengthy period of time with other conductors. In other words, I wanted a fresh open mind.

#### A Busy Orchestra

"Since its foundation, some eighteen months ago, the Royal Philharmonic has played in rehearsals, public performances and gramophone recordings some three hundred times. It has performed only twenty times with other conductors."

Before the war, Sir Thomas controlled the London Philharmonic Orchestra, which in those days was an unrivalled ensemble. With the wartime readjustments and inroads on personnel, it would be difficult for any orchestra to maintain a consistent status. By reason of this fact, Sir Thomas' organization of this newer and more personalized group was an understandable procedure. In christening the new ensemble, the conductor gave it the title of one he formerly had in the early thirties.

The new recording of Handel's *Messiah* was made in the past year under considerable difficulties by the conductor. It was begun in February 1947 during England's worst winter in more than 200 years. "On several occasions," Sir Thomas said, "the intense cold, coupled with the lack of heat and the shortage of electricity made it necessary to curtail recording activities. At a number of sessions, singers rehearsed and performed in frigid temperatures wearing fur

coats and tippets." In speaking of the many presentations of *The Messiah* over the long period of years, the conductor stated that there have been no more than a handful of performances with full artistic integrity.

"There are two reasons for this fact," he elucidated, "firstly, the general misunderstanding of the nature of Handel's music, and secondly, the continued refusal on the part of those responsible for the giving of it to observe Handel's own wishes respecting the conditions of its performance. Although the composer had at his disposal for certain occasions large groups numbering sometimes hundreds of performers, he could seldom command for any of his forty oratorios more than seventy or eighty in all. This number being made up of singers and players in equal proportions. The growth of choral societies in Great Britain and England, following Handel's death, destroyed the perfect balance between vocalists and instrumentalists under the old Handelian scheme. Choral groups were increased to bodies of 200 to 400 voices which were unmatched to an instrumental ensemble of forty or fifty players. Performances of this kind had the effect of muddying or obscuring completely Handel's polyphonic style of vocal writing.

#### On Tonal Effects

"No casual study of the great choral works of Handel, particularly those of dramatic character, reveals the clear possibility of an exceptionally wide range of tonal effect. The simpler and grander choruses can be executed by a large number of voices with impressive results if supported by an instrumental accompaniment of like weight. Others gain nothing but lose if sung by more than a moderate quantity, and this is especially the case with those of the lighter sort where the parts contain florid passages demanding some ease or agility of execution. It is for this reason that in my new recorded version I have made use of four separate choruses of varying dimensions, beginning with two wholly professional bodies of forty-two and sixty-five voices respectively and culminating with one where amateurs necessarily predominate of 250. I might add in my new recording every note of Handel's score is played."

The wisdom of Sir Thomas' selection and use of voices is substantiated by the "variety

of effects" he attains. Asked why he had not used all professional or all amateur singers, he stated:

"Amateurs are most eager to sing. Indeed, it is most difficult to keep them from not singing. Professionals are the opposite. They sing for payment and only respond to direction. Amateurs are most desirable in moments of exultation. They have a spontaneity and ardor which cannot be dampened. In the more difficult and exacting passages, professionals are preferable."

For over forty years, Sir Thomas has championed the music of Frederick Delius, whom he regards as one of the great composers of modern times. Those who disparage Delius, he pointed out, do so because the composer "had little or no aptitude for traffic with the sonata form. The most original side of his genius—his extraordinary harmonic endowment—is by no means fully understood or appreciated. Delius was capable of creating movements on a large scale which are shapely and logical. His use of the variation form is as startlingly original as it is diversified."

#### On Interpretation

Like all great conductors, Sir Thomas has strong convictions on the interpretation of all music, yet his views on this subject are neither biased nor intolerant.

"Let me present what I think is the duty of an interpreter of music," he said. "If music is a series of organized sounds which contain the elements of majesty, what we call romance, sweetness, solemnity, it must be the interpreter's effort to bring these out. Above all, he must always produce a beautiful sound. If by playing a certain work or part of it severely and solemnly, in any other way he fails to produce a beautiful sound, he may be sure he is mistaking the element he has tried to evoke. For example take the Andante of the *C major Symphony* of Schubert: the melodies can be played in several ways, that is to say in several alternative tempi and several alternative methods of expression. Surely, in view of the doctrine I have laid down that approach and that choice which yields the most satisfactory and most beautiful effects will be right and will sweep aside all purely objective and academic, or even traditional, conceptions of tempo. The examination of all examinations:

in my conception of the music of Mozart, the most commented upon is the finale of *Eine kleine Nachtmusik*. I am continually asked 'why do you take this movement more slowly than any other conductor?'. My answer has always been: 'That is the best possible reason'.

"A sensible, logical examination of music should be made at all times. The composer's markings—Allegro, Adagio, Presto, etc.—are too often misconceived in terms of tempo when they are in reality indications of mood."

#### On Recording

Recent developments in recording technique by H.M.V. in England have proved more realistic than any heard to date. These have brought a valued fidelity to the conductor's latest records. On the subject of reproduction, he said:

"I have not known generally what I wanted to reproduce up to recent years. Much was previously difficult to realize. From the purely technical standpoint, many things were not possible. I could not until recently get the sound of trombones as I wanted them nor the sound of percussion." As an example, he played for us the passage for the brasses (featuring the trombones) prior to Valentine's recitative, *O sainte médaille*, in the first act of *Faust* from his new recording of the opera, which is to be issued later this year. "This is the first time that passage has ever been clearly and cleanly reproduced," he pointed out.

The recording of *Faust*, from the evidence heard, may well make record history in the operatic field. "I chose young, fresh voices from the present-day singers in France," the conductor told us. Perhaps the most compelling artist of the cast is the basso, M. Ricco, who has a vibrant, ringing voice, with the true lower tones of the basso and the flexibility and ease of a baritone in his upper register. The Marguerite is Geori-Boué, a newcomer at the Paris Opera. Faust is M. Noré, a most capable and gifted lyric tenor, with Valentine the seasoned Roger Bourdoin, familiar to record collectors.

Sir Thomas' admiration of the music of Richard Strauss has resulted in new recordings of *Heldenleben*, *Don Quichotte*, *The Dance of the Seven Veils* from *Salome*, the suite—*Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*, Intermezzo from



*Intermezzo*, an excerpt from *Feuersnot*, and a large portion of *Electra*—from the arrival of Orestes to the end of the opera (8 sides). In the latter, the artists are Elsa Schleuter as *Electra*, Velitch as *Chrysothemis*, and Paul Schoeffler as Orestes. I cannot restrain my enthusiasm for this recording. It is music that has long been awaited and it is gratifying that a conductor of Sir Thomas' dramatic power and imagination has realized it.

Among new Mozart works which he has made are an early symphony—*No. 27 in G major, K. 199*, the *Divertimento in D major, K. 131*, the *Violin Concerto in G major, K. 216*—with Jascha Heifetz, and the *Flute and Harp Concerto, K. 299*—with René Le Roy and Lily Laskine. Other 18th-century works include the *Scherzo* from Handel's *Amaryllis*, the overture to Méhul's opera *Les Deux Aveugles*, and Paisiello's little overture *Nina o la pazzo d'amore*.

Collectors will be interested to know that the conductor has recorded Sibelius' *Second* and *Sixth Symphonies* and his tone poem, *Tapiola*, also the tone poems *The Garden of Fand* by Arnold Bax, *The Golden Spinning Wheel* by Dvorak, *Orpheus* by Liszt, and *Rouet d'Omphale* by Saint-Saëns. Other works, accomplished in the past year, are: *Bartered Bride—Overture and Comedians' Dance and Polka* (Smetana)

*Khovantchina—Persian Dances* (Moussorgsky)

*Piano Concerto No. 4*—with Artur Schnabel (Beethoven)

*King Lear Overture* (Berlioz)

*Printemps* (Debussy)

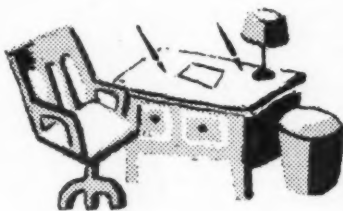
*Dernier Sommeil de la Vierge* (Massenet)

*Melusine—Overture; Midsummer Night's Dream—Overture and Scherzo* (Mendelssohn)

*Romeo and Juliet* and *Symphony No. 3* (Tchaikovsky)

In addition to the above, the conductor has been extending his list of Delius' music and redoing "under more ideal recording conditions" old favorites like *Brigg Fair* and *On Hearing the First Cuckoo in Spring*. Besides the *Song of the High Hills* and the *Piano Concerto* (issued last month by Victor), Sir Thomas has made Delius' *Violin Concerto* (with Pougnet) and the *Dance Rhapsody No. 2*. His future plans include recordings of the composer's opera, *A Village*

*Romeo and Juliet*, *Dance Rhapsody No. 1*, *On the Mountain*, *Songs of Sunset*, and *Song Before Sunrise*. This unquestionably is a rich harvest of musical offerings and an achievement of inestimable magnitude.



## SOME DISCONTENTS OF A CRITIC

By Alfred Frankenstein

At a recent luncheon in New York, given by Frederick Kugel—publisher of *Review of Recorded Music*—for presentation of the awards for the best records of the year chosen by 14 critics, Alfred Frankenstein—the eminent critic of the *San Francisco Chronicle*—gave a short speech, which later he extended into an article for us. Its theme is one which not only critics but many music enthusiasts frequently voice. We consider this a real challenge to the record companies and will welcome any reaction they wish to express. —Ed.

Back in 1926 and 1927, I interviewed every managing editor in New York in an attempt to interest the newspapers in reviewing records. Not one was even slightly sympathetic. As they all saw it then, the phonograph was a toy or a fad or a thing of no importance to anybody. Today every newspaper in the country prints record reviews as a matter of course, magazines devoted solely to records are taken for granted, and even literary journals give the disc an extremely prominent place.

All of this is evidence not of journalistic progress but of the progress of the record itself. Huge advances have been made in the techniques of registering and reproducing sound, and the repertoires of the world's folk and art music have been deeply explored by recording agencies. Works, indeed whole areas of music,

which we never hear in "live" performance are now as familiar to us as the standard classics, and the standard classics have really become such. The debt which our generation and the generation of our children owe to the phonograph is immeasurable.

A critic, however, is a person who is perennially discontent, and I should like to use my critic's privilege to express several discontents which I still harbor toward the makers of phonograph records.

The first of these has to do with the endless, and, from my point of view, inexplicable duplication of repertoire which goes on among the record companies all the time. It is obvious that they all want and need to record certain standard works. Virgil Thomson's "fifty pieces" must form the backbone of their catalogues. But it seems to us at the critics' desks that as soon as Company A comes out with a given work, no matter what it may be, Company B immediately comes along with the same thing. It would seem to make better sense, from every point of view, if Company B came along with something different. The repertoire of music is so large and the important works are so many that one might think it a better commercial bet to diversify rather to duplicate.

The situation is even worse when, as often happens, the same company will re-issue the same work in an inferior performance and then withdraw the better one from its catalogue. We know that singers and conductors and pianists are constantly after the companies to let them record successful works, but when this means that a masterly interpretation on discs is suppressed in favor of one that is not half so good, we can only stand up and protest.

#### On Repertoire

I also find it difficult to account for many things the companies do in their selection of repertoire. Records come out, month after month, with no order or plan, in a completely haphazard and helter-skelter style. Works of wide but temporary interest, like the *Seventh Symphony* of Shostakovich, appear on records long after their time is over. Many masterpieces of immense importance remain untouched, while others, often of no greater popularity, are done innumerable times. The whole has a kind of slap-happy and short-sightedly opportunistic look which might have been justified at one time, but which is not justified in a mature and stable industry.

I am also distressed and often infuriated over the fact that the annotations which are issued in connection with American records are, with a few exceptions, so poor. They are better than they used to be, but they are still far below the English standard. Just when they were improving a little in this country, the recording companies ceased to issue pamphlets with their sets and began crowding all the notes onto "liners," which are often far too limited in space and inseparable from the album (being glued to the front cover).

A person who buys a set of records does so because he wants to hear the piece involved

more than once; he wishes to become familiar with it and to enjoy it often. In other words, the aids to enjoyment which are provided by annotation should be more detailed and inclusive when they are issued in connection with records than when they are issued in connection with symphony concerts, but they are invariably a great deal less so. Furthermore, they are often poorly written, inaccurate and incomplete. One of the worst offenses is the issuance of sets of vocal records in foreign languages with text only in English, or with no text at all. It is a little frightening to think of the millions of people who go through life without ever having the slightest idea of what their favorite songs, arias, even whole operas and oratorios, are all about.

I am not, I think, a fanatic on this subject. I believe that many works really need no annotation at all and that some need a good deal less than they get. The absurdity of the thing, both in records and in symphony concert programs, lies in setting up a fixed amount of space for annotation which cannot be expanded if it ought to be and, on the other hand, must be filled even though there is nothing of importance to fill it with. As applied to records, this means, among other things, that a good many single discs should be accompanied by leaflets or printed envelopes, but they very seldom are.

Perhaps there are reasons for all these curious and undesirable manifestations. If so, they have never been explained to me. Explanation of them might be of interest to more than a single person.

## BOOK REVIEWS

**THE NEW CATALOGUE OF HISTORICAL RECORDS (1898-1908/09).** By Robert Bauer. Published by Sidgwick and Jackson, Ltd., London, England. 494 pp. Price \$9.75.

● The long anticipated revision of Bauer's catalogue of historical vocal recordings is finally ready for distribution in this country. The volume was begun in California during the war by W. R. Moran, completed in Italy by Bauer and printed there last September. It was bound and published in England.

During the past half-dozen years, there has been an increasing demand for this book which should be welcomed eagerly by collectors of old vocal records. The present volume is 200 pages longer than the previous one, and includes such new features as birth, debut and death dates of many of the artists, two valuable pages of label information, not to forget the binding of cloth instead of paper. It is the only work of its kind available and few devotees of recorded voices of the past should deny themselves the pleasure and profit of owning it.

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TAURINO PARVIS  
AS IAGO

## PERSONAL PREFERENCES

By Ulysses Walsh

*This is the fifth in a series of articles dealing with personal record favorites. Mr. Walsh, known to his friends as Jim, is a newspaper editor in Roanoke, Va. He needs no introduction to our readers. His eclectic interest in records of by-gone days has fascinated readers all over the world, as well as those listeners who hear regularly his radio programs broadcast from his home town.* —Ed.

Although this article has been written at the editor's request, it is submitted with considerable diffidence. My predecessors in this series, when writing about their favorite records, have confined themselves almost entirely to accepted masterworks interpreted by distinguished conductors and performers and reaching an exalted standard of technical excellence.

I shall be a conspicuous exception. Most of the favorite records I shall mention were made many years ago by the old acoustic method, and have long since been stricken from the manufacturers' lists. To add to the confusion, long-forgotten popular songs and comic sketches will take their places with compositions of a far different and more enduring type. I am uncomfortably aware that, out of my collection of many thousands of records, it is next to impossible to lay hands on a dozen or so and say, "These are my favorites". Instead, I prefer to select a few that have played important parts in forming my somewhat bewilderingly

contradictory musical tastes, and to write briefly concerning them.

Many readers know me as a veteran advocate of the theory that the pioneer "popular" recording artists were, for the most part, great performers in their specialized fields, and I believe there is a common impression that I enjoy no music other than the popular tunes of the 1890's and early 1900's. Hence it may come as a surprise that my first selection is:

MEYERBEER: *L'Africana—Adamastor Re dell' onde profonde*; and VERDI: *Otello—Era la notte*. Sung by Taurino Parvis (baritone). Columbia disc A-715.

● I have chosen this double-faced disc, made in 1909 by the once famous Italian baritone, Taurino Parvis, because over the years it has meant more to me than any other operatic record ever issued. It was, in fact, the first "grand opera" record I ever heard. My parents acquired a phonograph when I was about six years old, and the discs which came with it included this Parvis one. Probably the dealer in the little Virginia town was sure he would never sell it and gladly "threw it in".

Not being of Italian descent, I had no idea of the words, but Parvis' dramatic singing of both sides made a powerful appeal to my childish imagination. That was particularly true of the *Otello* excerpt. I can't think of anything more calculated to inspire terror than the way

in which Parvis, as Iago, relates to the jealous Othello the things he malignantly represents Cassio to have murmured about Desdemona in his dreams. For years I didn't have the slightest conception of the story behind the record. Instead, I tried to make English of the foreign words and thought I detected a phrase about someone suffering from "a cruel yellow fever". The thing fascinated, while it frightened me.

The *Africana* side, I realize now, is a curiosity. It plays for only a minute and a half, whereas Ruffo's version of the same aria required a 12-inch Red Seal. Obviously, Parvis has recorded only a fragment of the African slave, Nelusko's, account of the fearful Adamastor, but the brief passage has always seemed to me a fascinating combination of terror and exhilaration. I still have a childish tendency to shudder when the baritone breaks into a wild laugh, but revel in the rapid-fire portion which follows when he seems to "go into his dance."

Some years ago I found a green-label Columbia on which Parvis sings an entirely different version of *Adamastor*. It is considerably longer and is taken in a rather restrained and subdued style that I do not like half so well.

SCHUMANN: *The Two Grenadiers* Sung by Albert Edmund Brown. GOUNOD: *Philemon and Baucis—Vulcan's Song*. Sung by Frederic Martin (bass). Columbia disc A-729.

● In that same group of records was another which has given me lifelong pleasure, and served as an introduction to a higher type of music than that I was accustomed to hearing. For many years, Mr. Brown, solely on the strength of *The Two Grenadiers*, occupied a niche all his own in my esteem as the ideal baritone. After I grew up and learned that he was the director of the department of music education at Ithaca college, I wrote to him and said I considered the record to have had a great influence on my musical tastes. I was rather non-plussed when he replied that he considered the three Columbia records he made in 1909 to be very poor from a recording standpoint. He also said he thought his interpretation of *The Two Grenadiers* was ruined by the late Victor Emerson's insistence that he sing it at top speed to get it all on a ten-inch disc. Nevertheless, I still cherish the record. *Vulcan's Song* also has a great sentimental value. Dr. Frederic L. Martin, who died a year or so ago, was a native of Rhode Island, who became a well known concert and oratorio singer. For many years, during his later life, he was head of the music department of Virginia Interment College in Bristol, Virginia, and for a long time I lived within 25 miles of him. To my regret, we never knew each other, although I did write and tell him how much his record had meant to me.

*Yankiana Rag (Oh, That Yankee Rag)*. Sung by Billy Murray (tenor), with Chorus. Columbia disc A-643.

Also included in that earliest group of records was one of an entirely different sort, which gave me the greatest musical enthusiasm of my life—my devotion to that king of comic song singers, Billy Murray. Of late years, Murray has become a very dear friend of mine, thus more than fulfilling the most audacious dreams of my infancy, when I felt that I could cheerfully die for the sake of receiving one kind word from him. As I write, Billy, living in retirement at Freeport, Long Island, is scheduled to be the subject of a "profile" in the *New Yorker*. It is my cherished conviction that his is the greatest name in the history of recorded popular music. The record I speak of is a cheerfully senseless composition by E. Ray Goetz and the late Melville C. Gideon, entitled *The Yankiana Rag*, and also known as *Oh, That Yankee Rag*. It too came out in 1909, and on it Billy has the assistance of a few female voices in the chorus. The song, utterly worthless from a literary standpoint but with a lively, likable tune, tells of how the Parisians of nearly 40 years ago were ragtime crazy. When I first heard that record I took it to have some reference to the Civil War, in which the Yankees had swarmed down and ravaged the South, but, sectional prejudice aside, I knew I had found my favorite comedian for keeps. It also inspired me with an enduring passion for old-fashioned ragtime.

BERNARD: *The Battle of San Juan Hill*; and HERZER: *Everybody Two-Step*. Piano solos by Mike Bernard. Columbia discs A-1266.

Now that the subject of ragtime has been brought up, I may as well mention a Columbia record, made in 1912, on which Mike Bernard, one of the greatest pianists of the old ragtime school, plays his own composition, *The Battle of San Juan Hill*, and a forgotten popular song, *Everybody Two-Step*. Columbia's piano recording was always good and, for something made 36 years ago, the realism of tone is remarkable. It's a pity that Bernard didn't make a much longer list of records than the few very hard-to-find ones that stand to his credit. Why doesn't some recording company get an old school ragtime piano player—say, Dave Kaplan, who used to accompany Billy Jones and Ernest Hare—to make an album or two before the style of playing becomes extinct?

LODGE: *Templation Rag*. Played by Harry Roy's Orchestra. Decca disc 1151.

For a superb example of modern treatment of ragtime, I know nothing better than the series of Decca records which Harry Roy's orchestra made in England before the recent war, featuring his scintillating pianists, Ivor Morton and Dave Kaye. My favorite of the lot is *Templation Rag*. Decca might well restore the entire Roy series to its catalog. For sheer side-splitting comedy in music, I nominate the records which Harry Reser's Cliquot Club Eskimoes, also known as the Six Jumping Jacks, the Seven Little Polar Bears and heaven knows what else, made for virtually all the recording

companies about 20 years ago. They were funnier than anything Spike Jones has ever done. That leads me to an irresistible specimen of instrumental ragtime lunacy.

**Twelfth Street Rag.** Ukulele solo by Roy Smek. Edison Diamond Disc 52287.

I know of nothing more completely contagious than this Smek record—nothing more calculated to cheer up a listener with the blues. Almost equally amusing are Felix Arndt's old Victor acoustic piano record of his *Desecration Rag*, distorting famous operatic melodies, and Frank Banta's electric version on Victor of Arndt's *Operatic Nightmare*.

**BEETHOVEN: "Moonlight" Sonata.** Played by Ignaz Friedman. *"Pathétique" Sonata.* Played by William Murdoch. Columbia Masterworks Album No. 54.

The piano has always been my favorite recording instrument (may I also give a grateful nod to the banjo plunking of Vess Ossman, Fred Van Eps and Harry Reser and the piano-accounting of Pietro Deiro?). However, until I heard this album my appreciation of keyboard music was largely restricted to playing of the Arndt, Banta and Bernard schools. I am aware that better recordings of these classics have been issued since this album came out during the Beethoven Centennial twenty years ago, and that the playing of both Friedman and Murdoch was criticized. However, these recordings opened a new world of appreciation to me, and—incurable sentimentalism that I am—it still holds its place as my favorite of its type.

**BACH: Toccata and Fugue in D minor.** Played by the Philadelphia Orchestra, directed by Leopold Stokowski. Victor disc 6751.

A similar awakening to the beauties of the full symphony orchestra came when I first listened to Stokowski's arrangement of the Bach *Toccata and Fugue*, played by the Philadelphia Symphony on this history-making Victor Red Seal. An old mountaineer woman, who heard that record by accident when she came into a music store to buy the latest Carter Family hill-billy offering, summed up my feelings when she said, "I'm doggoned if that ain't pretty music!"—although I thought pretty a rather weak word. She added: "Somehow, after that, the Cyarter Family don't soun' so good." Having always lived in small towns, where there was no opportunity of hearing good orchestras and with my knowledge of orchestral music restricted to what I had heard on acoustic recordings, this *Toccata and Fugue* came as a revelation. I believe an even better version by the Philadelphians has since been issued, but I'm holding on to the original.

**SCHUMANN: Quintet in E flat major.** Played by E. Robert Schmitz (piano) and the New York Philharmonic Quartet. Edison Diamond Discs Nos. 80885/86.

My greatest love in fine music is for the string quartet. When a piano is added, that makes it all the better. Chamber music attracts me more powerfully than either the symphony or opera. The gateway was opened for me in 1928 by these two Edison records, containing a somewhat abbreviated version of the Schumann Quintet. The recording seemed to me to be wonderful—it still does—and the music beautiful beyond expression. If I had unlimited means and unrestricted storage space, I'd certainly go in for chamber music collecting on an extensive scale.

**Little Arrow and Big Chief Greasepaint.** Comic Sketch by Ada Jones and Len Spencer. Edison Blue Amberol Cylinder No. 3899.

For an abrupt change of mood, I return to my first love, recorded comedy, which has always been the dominant interest of my disc and cylinder collecting activities. The greatest writer of comedy for the phonograph was Len Spencer, who died in December, 1914. If he were alive today he might do something to improve radio humor. I believe that Spencer's greatest effort in the broadly humorous field was his burlesque Indian sketch, *Little Arrow and Big Chief Greasepaint*, which he and the now legendary Ada Jones first recorded in 1909 on a four-minute Edison wax cylinder. It was later re-made as Blue Amberol cylinder No. 3899, and is one of the funniest things ever put on records. In so saying I am not overlooking hundreds of Billy Murray classics; Billy Golden's Negro specialties; or such Jones and Hare masterpieces as their 1927 Columbia, *I Love to Catch Brass Rings on a Merry-Go-Round*, or Nat M. Wills' 1908 Victor of a "burlesque balad, *Saving Up Coupons for Mother*.

**Harry von Tilser Medley.** Sung by Frank Crumit. Decca disc 205.

For soothing music, nothing is much better than many of the late Frank Crumit's quietly restrained renditions of popular songs for Victor and Decca. That is particularly true of his 1935 medley of Harry von Tilser songs formerly issued by Decca.

**Irish Medley.** Marie Lawton and her Harp. Parlophone disc E-6304.

Speaking of soothing music, a really beautiful record is this, an electric recording made in England about 20 years ago by a lady named Marie Lawton, who plays her own harp accompaniment. It doesn't matter that among the supposedly old Irish songs she sings in a dainty light soprano is a 1919 American production, *That Tumble-Down Shack in Athlone*. Miss Lawton's singing and playing have a quiet charm unlike anything else I have ever heard.

**The Sidewalks of New York.** Played by Frank Novak's Knickerbocker Serenaders. Decca set 354.

For a concluding nomination, let me say I don't believe there is any more restful music to

be found anywhere than the foregoing album, containing excerpts from about 60 old-time popular songs. Novak's combination includes the harmonica, mandolin and accordion, among other instruments. I know of no better way of forgetting the worries of this fear-plagued time and drifting back to a more gracious period, when people worked longer hours than they do now but still seemed to have more leisure for doing the things they really cared for, than by loading up the automatic and listening to the Knickerbocker Serenaders.

In Charles Dickens' *Hard Times*, a harassed Lancashire weaver, Stephen Blackpool, expresses his belief that the relations between capital and labor, and those between men and women, are "all a muddle". I fear that's exactly the impression I'll leave with the average reader, who will find it hard to understand how one man can profess a fondness for so many glaringly different kinds of music. I can only repeat that I've written honestly—but that, when I try to reason out my preferences logically, I'm just about as sincerely puzzled as anybody else can be.

### Editorial Notes

(Continued from page 229)

Unfortunately, many poor pressings are being marketed these days, and we have acquired a few. Company officials admit this fact but state that efforts are being made constantly to rectify the trouble. This situation is not peculiarly true to this country. We have proof that there are records made in England and other countries which are equally at fault. In a forthcoming issue, we shall publish an article by an English technician on this subject, in which he outlines the various common defects of commercial records.

While geography is not by any means a determining factor for the quality of any record pressing, a bad one purchased in the middle west may prove to be an insuperably fine one in the east or far west. There would seem to be good and bad pressings of many recordings. When we acquire a poor one our warning to readers frequently places us in an embarrassing position, for inevitably someone—more fortunate than we—writes: "You reviewers are all alike, complaining about poor surfaces. It might interest you to know that I acquired a set of . . . and found it contained perfect surfaces." This only proves our contention about good and bad pressings. When a dealer is reluctant to refund money on a set, which a buyer claims has poor surfaces, it is understandable. He has no way of knowing, whether the person returning it, has faulty equipment or has played the set with a badly worn needle. Yet the basic responsibility may lie with this very dealer who sells such needles under pressure of reputedly false claims. This is proof of the typical gullibility of the average purchaser to the pressure of advertising.

The motto of this chatter, if there is one, remains a personal one. If you are having trouble with record wear—look to your equipment. Ascertain the number of times you have used a so-called permanent needle. If it is over 500 plays, it probably needs replacement. As a matter of fact it should be examined after 200 plays, and subsequently after each 100. The weight and alignment of the pickup has much to do with the length of time a needle may be safely used. It is true that a semi-permanent needle will pay 10,000 times, but this does not mean it will not be badly worn and doing damage long before it has been used that many times. You might acquire one needle of a given manufacturer and find it lasted longer and played better than another. There is unfortunately a lack of uniformity in point radius in many brands of needles on the market. It is the old fault of mass production to lower cost.

Wear on a needle point which is damaging to the record cannot be seen by the naked eye. Two simple tests can be made, however. If a jewel point dragged across the thumb nail scratches—that needle is doing many times as much damage to your record. If you hold the corner of a handkerchief just back of the pickup and against the needle and discover gray dust from the record, your needle definitely needs replacement.

\* \* \*

Because recordings are a permanent document of music and artistry, it has always been our contention that reviews should not be hastily written. In our estimation, the record reviewer has a far greater responsibility than that of the concert-hall critic.

Since the inception of this magazine, we have endeavored to avoid rushing its publication. We like to spend a few days with the finest recordings and take time to contemplate the presentations from all angles and to make comparisons. In this way, we believe we best serve our readers. In the past eight months, record companies have invited reviewers wishing to make a deadline to come to their offices and hear sample pressings of the coming releases. This is not always conducive to the best interests of the record buyer. If the commercial releases were always comparable to the sample pressings or *vice versa*, and the equipment provided identical to one's own, things might be different. However, this is seldom the case.

Discussing this condition recently with our friend, David Hall, who has had considerable experience along these lines, he told us: "I am opposed to reviewers working from sample pressings or from equipment other than their own. In my estimation, no one can do full justice to recordings in this manner." The staff of this periodical are in agreement. If we were at all concerned with a job of merchandising, as so many are at present, the type of pressing and the equipment would be unimportant.



## RECORD NOTES AND R E V I E W S

ANDERSON: *Chicken Reel*, and *Fiddle Faddle*; The Boston "Pops" Orchestra, conducted by Arthur Fiedler. Victor 10-inch disc, price \$1.00.

▲A bit of musical fun into which Fiedler enters with alacrity and vim. This is a companion disc to Fiedler's *Turkey in the Straw* and *Virginia Reel*. Leroy Anderson's treatment of the *Chicken Reel*, perhaps best known in the "sawing" technique of a country fiddler, is highly sophisticated. It reminds me of one of Dwight Fiske's yarns about a chicken. The poor bird is sometimes lost in an orchestral mire and is not rescued by the rooster's crow at the end. However, it's all in fun and this sort of nonsense can be most diverting on occasion. Swell recording! —P.G.

BACH: *Brandenburg Concerto No. 1* (5 sides), and *Nun komm' der Heiden Heiland* (1 side). Vox set 618, price \$7.25. *Brandenburg Concerto No. 2*. Vox set 619, two discs, price \$5.25. *Brandenburg Concerto No. 3* (3 sides) and *Bist Du bei mir* (1 side). Vox set 620, price \$5.25. The Pro Musica Orchestra, conducted by Otto Klemperer.

▲The vinylite pressings generally offer quiet

surfaces. The orchestral ensemble, which I have previously discussed, lacks finesse. The absence of acoustic liveness may be partially at fault. This inevitably disturbs perfect balance. Too, it is always a difficult task for any conductor to take an impromptu ensemble and obtain smoothest results. Yet Klemperer's fine sense of orchestral control and rhythmic assurance are equal to his striking musicianship. To say that his tempos are perfectly chosen is an overstatement. There is considerable variance of viewpoint on this subject and most Bach authorities are unwilling to give him or Busch the palm. I gather from several, who have studied Bach's intentions, that the ideal approach would lie between Klemperer and Busch. Some claim Busch is too sentimental and Klemperer too unyieldingly straightforward. No one can disclaim Klemperer lacking vitality or demonstrating variation of mood in rhythm. The opening movement of the second concerto is an example. In this, he keeps the music from becoming merely a jog-trot as it does in the Koussevitzky version. The latter's conceptions of Bach are over-refined with too many indulgences in romantic swells and ritards. The strength of the music is certainly felt and conveyed by Klemperer. For this reason, I admire his performances, though I am disinclined to



consider them as displacements for these of Busch.

The two fillers-in do not appeal to me. However, it should be noted that Klemperer's arrangement of the Choral-Prelude, which follows the first concerto, has a quiet dignity more befitting the music than Stokowski's romanticism. —P.H.R.

**BEETHOVEN:** *Symphony No. 9 in D minor, Op. 125*; The Boston Symphony Orchestra, with the Berkshire Festival Chorus (Robert Shaw, director), Frances Yeend (soprano), David Lloyd (tenor), Eunice Alberts (contralto), James Peese (bass), conducted by Serge Koussevitzky. Victor set DM-1190, eight discs, price \$9.00 (Manuel set \$10.00).

▲Despite the greatness of this symphony, its success depends with most listeners on the satisfactory qualities of the finale. Since this movement has proved the least satisfactory on records, the achievement in this set would seem to me to be found in its finale, which is aurally pleasurable both vocally and instrumentally. True, the chorus sacrifices some tonal beauty for incisiveness, but the latter element is of prime importance to Beethoven's intentions. The four soloists are capable singers, with agreeable voices. That they do not hug the microphone or stand out like four sore thumbs is a pleasing factor. Yet, at times, some of the solo singing is submerged by the chorus.

This is not as brilliant a recording as Koussevitzky's recent *Eroica*, owing to the difference in acoustics at Tanglewood (where the recording was made) from those of Symphony Hall in Boston. Moreover, the level of the reproduction is lower. The Tanglewood shed tends to disperse tone with resultant loss of overtones. However, the clarity of line and the usual sensuous sound associated with the Boston Orchestra is apparent. Koussevitzky's performance is super-refined, but for all its beauty of tone the emotion is not all persuasive. His conception is musically sound—rhythmically he is generally forthright and his dynamics are admirably considered. What the performance lacks is dramatic force. In my estimation, the conductor is more concerned with the perfection of the orchestral playing than with musical meaning.

Having heard this set first from sample pressings which were free of surface sound, it was disappointing to find in the shellac records sent to us disturbing surface scratch at the beginning of many record sides. This prevailed for an inch or more in and then gradually decreased. From the sample pressings, the dynamic gradations were most gratifyingly revealed and the beauty of sound consistent. From the shellac pressings, these qualities were somewhat annulled. It would seem that we obtained a poor pressing which assuredly substantiates the contentions outlined in our editorial notes.

**BIZET:** *L'Arlesienne Suites Nos. 1 and 2* (5 sides); and **PUCCHINI:** *Manon Lescaut—Intermezzo to Act II* (1 side); The National Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Sidney Beer. Decca set EDA 42, price \$7.00.

▲The spaciousness of the sound and the tonal beauty are the arresting factors of this recording. For those who do not wish to penetrate beneath the surface, the playing is efficient and satisfying. One misses the rhythmic sensitivity of Beecham, the subtle use of rubato, the substantiation of the Gallic charm which Bizet affirmed in almost everything he wrote. The wider range of dynamics and the lovely texture of the pianissimo passages is not found in either Beecham's or Stokowski's recordings. The inscription on the album is misleading. We do not have Suites 1 and 2. Instead we have the first three movements of Suite 1—the Prelude, Minuet, Adagietto, and the finale of Suite 2—the Farandole, to which is added an orchestral interlude from an early Puccini opera. The latter may prove welcome since it is only available, as far as I know, in the complete performance of *Manon Lescaut* which Columbia made in Italy some years ago, never released here.

**BIZET:** *Carmen—Suites Nos. 1 and 2*; The National Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Anatole Fistoulari. Decca set EDA-41, three discs, price \$7.00.

▲Again concert hall spaciousness and dynamic gradations serve both conductor and listener advantageously. Some of the instrumentation has never been so realistically heard in a recording. Fistoulari knows



his theater, all of which makes the missing singers in such excerpts as the *Habanera*, the *Chanson Bohème* and *Micaela's Aria* (called *Nocturne* here) the more keenly desired. This business of *Suites 1* and *2* is a bit confusing. The arranger is not given, and the sequence of the pieces somewhat arbitrary. We begin with *Prelude to Act I*, followed by *Prelude to Act II*. Then comes *Les Dragons d'Alcala*, *La Garde Montante*, and the entr'acte, *Aragonaise*. This is the so-called *Suite No. 1*. *Suite No. 2* consists of the *Habanera*, the *Chanson Bohème*, the *Intermezzo to Act III* and the *Marche des Contrebandiers*, with *Micaela's Aria* as a finale. The latter is an anti-climax to the preceding colorful music and certainly was never intended for just orchestra. Stokowski has played such vocal selections in his last recording of the *Carmen* music (Victor set 1001). There are listeners who like operatic music arranged for orchestras, and unquestionably they will be drawn to this recording. There is much rhythmic animation and contrast in the conductor's treatment of this music. Of the several *Carmen* suites, my preference goes to the Beecham.

**BRITTEN:** *Four Sea Interludes and Pas-sacaglia* from *Peter Grimes*; The Concertgebouw Orchestra of Amsterdam, conducted by Edward van Beinum. Decca set EDA-50, three discs, price \$7.00.

▲Mr. Sackville-West, in his survey of English recording for the latter half of 1947 (see February issue), spoke enthusiastically about this set, and well he may because the music is both imaginative and stirring. The *Pas-sacaglia* is a poignant piece of work, making ingenious use of a simple ground base. The theme is taken from a phrase sung by Grimes to the words: "And God have mercy on me." It is an extraordinary vivid musical depiction of Grimes' character—an ambitious, impetuous and frustrated person who lacks all respect of other people's rights. The four *Sea Pictures*—Dawn, Sunday Morning, Moonlight, and Storm—are mood paintings. These interludes are not sequentially arranged from the opera, but in a way to make them most effective in the concert hall.

The high pitched melodic lines, which open the first interlude, suggest an intensi-

fication of light and mist over a quiet but uncertain sea. The undulation of the water and its ominousness is conveyed alternately in rippling lines by harp and strings and in harsh chords by the brasses. A crescendo in the brasses suggests very effectively the sea's dominance in the scene near the end. The second interlude depicts the Sunday scene in the opening of Act II—the hurrying steps of people bound for church and a smoother sea. The Moonlight Interlude is a remarkable tonal landscape of sustained poetic writing. The Storm, both vivid and exciting, reveals keen imagination. Here, Britten's use of the brass and percussion are poignant and telling. W. R. Anderson, in *The Gramophone*, calls attention to the "soft passage heard high up on the orchestra, after a harp *glissando*, and at a sudden lull in the storm", which is used three times in the interlude. "It is the phrase which Grimes has sung, and twice repeated, just before the curtain comes down on the first scene of Act I and immediately before the storm Interlude". Peter, alone at the time, gazing into the storm-gathering sea, and thinking of Ellen, the woman he loves, sings: "What harbor shelters peace? . . . Her breast is harbor too, where night is turned to day." The composer's reuse of this phrase is, as Anderson has said, "a finely imaginative stroke".

The recording and performance of this music are splendid. The string tone is especially fine—rich and lustrous. The conductor reveals a penetrating insight into the composer's intentions. I find this the most persuasive music-making Van Beinum has accomplished on records to date. —P.H.R.

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COATES: *Dancing Nights Valse*; The London Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Eric Coates. Columbia 10-inch disc 17514-D, price \$1.00.

▲Eric Coates is deceptively innocuous; he writes so easily and so fluently. His scoring is clean and clear and always just right—none of this pretentious stuff that we get in this country on the radio. He is easy to listen to, although I must admit I do not have the urge to repeat him often. This is a pleasantly tuneful little waltz, nicely played and recorded. —P.G.

GLINKA: *Russian and Ludmilla—Overture*; The Philadelphia Orchestra, conducted by Eugene Ormandy. Columbia 10-inch disc 19010-D, price \$1.00.

▲From the first notes the efficiency of the orchestral playing is detected. There is a relentless vigor and dramatic impact to this performance. I prefer a more relaxed treatment. This brilliant reading would have impressed more were it on the single side of a 12-inch disc as the break disturbs the compulsion of the conductor's drive. The recording lacks some brightness on the high side. —P.H.R.

KHACHATURIAN: *Gayne—Ballet Suite No. 2*; The Philharmonic-Symphony Orchestra of New York, conducted by Efrem Kurtz. Columbia set X or MX-292, two discs, price \$3.35.

▲The opulent recording, especially in the final section, will probably place the album under many buyers' arms for keeps before they leave a record booth. Yet the music adds nothing to the composer's reputation and does not measure up to *Suite No. 1* which Kurtz recorded a year ago. There are four movements—Russian Dance, Andante, Adagio, and Fire. The third is scored for string quartet and harp, and played by leading members of the orchestra. The Russian Dance is rowdy and athletic. The Andante is sensuous, sentimental, and reminiscent of Tchaikovsky. The composer may have aimed for introposection in the Adagio but attains, in my estimation, only an intimacy in ensemble. The excerpt, which the notes describe as "a poignant musical portrait of Gayne the idealist, the troubled wife, the tender woman", is just cloying sentiment to

me. Fire is appropriately bombastic—ideal movie music for a conflagration.

Mr. Kurtz does justice to the music. Khachaturian fans take notice! —P.G.

MOZART: *Symphony in G minor, K. 550*; The Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Fritz Reiner. Columbia set MMV-727, three plastic discs, price \$6.85 (shellac pressing, set MM-727, price \$4.60).

▲I have never heard Reiner conduct Mozart before. It reveals a new side of his music-making which is at once agreeable and enlightening. His performance is clean textured, poised and free from rhythmic restlessness. Moreover, the recording solves the acoustic problems of the Syria Mosque in a more appreciable manner than ever before. There is just the right amount of spaciousness in sound. The two most favored performances of this symphony are those by Beecham and Toscanini. Neither recording is fully satisfying; the Toscanini being the most unsatisfactory with its dry studio qualities.

Beecham's reading is the most refined and gracious, yet the conductor's slower pacing does not fully convey the impassioned qualities of the score. Toscanini's interpretation is fervent and intense with faster tempi, yet the fluidity and detailed perfection of his performance is unblemished. Toscanini senses tragic import in this symphony and expressed to me that he considers its minuet the most tragic ever written. Discussing the work with Beecham recently, he too conceded tragic implications. This point of view is diametrically opposed to Tovey's, which the annotator to this set glibly quotes. Tovey is an astute and discerning music critic, but his judgments are by no means infallible. I think that Einstein penetrates the heart of the case when he states the "exposition of the first movement has something both fierce and weary about it" and that the last movement "plunges into the abyss of the soul". This Mozart scholar goes on to say: "It is strange how easily the world has accepted such a work . . . as a document of 'Grecian lightness and grace'—a characterization that could apply at best only to the divine tranquility of the Andante or to the Trio of the Minuet, otherwise so heroically tragic."

Reiner strikes a middle ground between Beecham and Toscanini. His is a warmly human interpretation, admirable for its musicianly proportions and earnest, if not impassioned, outline of the music's dramatic implications.

This set is the first plastic pressing that Columbia has released. The substance of the material is vinylite and the disc is a black, flexible one with a generally smooth surface, but it is not entirely free of the ticks that seem to prevail in all this kind of material.

**SAINT-SAËNS:** *Omphale's Spinning Wheel* (*Symphonic Poem*), Op. 31; Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, conducted by Sir Thomas Beecham. Victor disc 12-0152, price \$1.25.

▲Tovey has said that he could not help playing Saint-Saëns' symphonic poems, *Le Rouet d'Omphale* and *Phaëton*, "they are so damned clever". This reference to these compositions comes at the opening of his first book

of *Essays in Musical Analysis*, but is not followed up by an analysis of the works. Perhaps there is little more to say. The composer reveals a skillful hand at instrumentation but aims for no depth of interest. The present work shows a Gallic elegance and animation. In dealing with "feminine seductiveness, the contest of feebleness against strength", a satirical touch would have definitely enhanced the musical interest. Dukas should have turned his attentions to this subject, which illustrates "the old story of Hercules serving as a slave to the Lydian Queen, and running her spinning-wheel in female attire by her side". The humor of this situation cannot fail to evoke a smile, but Saint-Saëns is content with naïveté and gracefulness. Even Hercules' groans are rather feeble. This is no more than musical imagery, whose charm lies in the sensitivity and refinement of its performance. Beecham realizing these qualities with discernment and taste, enhances the listener's interest. The recording, with its realistic *pianissimi*, is pleasantly natural in tonal quality.

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SCHUBERT: *Rosamunde—Ballet Music*; and MOZART: *Minuet, K. 409*; The Cleveland Orchestra, conducted by Erich Leinsdorf. Columbia disc 12749-D, price \$1.00.

▲The Mozart is a first recording. According to Einstein, Mozart wrote this minuet for insertion in the *C major Symphony, K. 338* at a later date. It is never included, as far as I can remember, in a performance of the latter work. Einstein says the minuet "is one of the most pretentious he [Mozart] ever wrote, with solo display passages for the winds in the trio". Leinsdorf's conception of both the Mozart and Schubert seems to me a bit black and white. The *Rosamunde* is the *Ballet No. 2* which both Harty and Walter have treated more graciously. This well recorded minuet by Mozart is welcome though it would have profited with more imaginative treatment.

SIBELIUS: *En Saga (Symphonic Poem), Op. 9*; (5 sides), and *Valse Triste* (1 side); The London Philharmonic Orchestra, conducted by Victor de Sabata. Decca set EDA-49, three discs, price \$7.00.

▲*En Saga* has long been one of the most widely known and frequently performed of Sibelius' tone poems. It was included in Vol. 6 of the Sibelius Society recordings, issued in May 1940, in a performance by Beecham. The modern reproduction of this version throws new light on the music. For the first time on records, we hear the pianissimo passages played as they should be, with the result that the opening and closing of the work have a mysterious quality of beauty not similarly substantiated in the earlier set. Moreover, de Sabata's use of a slower tempo in the final pages (side 5) realizes the tranquil quality of the music, indicated by the composer in his marking—*Moderato e tranquillo*, in a most effective manner. It bears out Cecil Gray's assertion that "the music should gradually die away into nothingness."

Sibelius has provided no program for this work. A saga is described by Webster as "a Scandinavian myth or heroic story". One writer has suggested that Sibelius' *Saga* "might well be associated in the mind of the listener with some ancient Scandinavian epic". Certainly, the music is fantastical,

eerie, heroic and lamentative. I do not entirely agree with those who claim this music to be wholly Scandinavian. I hear in it a Slavic plaintiveness. There are moments of haunting beauty in this score—which, for Sibelius, are unusually warm-hued. The composer has told us that the work was derived from youthful themes kept in his sketchbooks, later revised and shaped with the knowledge acquired through experience. *En Saga* is far more original and forceful than the composer's early symphonies.

Mr. de Sabata's performance of this music reveals dramatic resourcefulness. He infuses the score with warmth of the true Latin. The realistic reproduction, with its wider variation of tone color and dynamics, provides an improvement that was missing in previous recordings of this work. I find the conductor's reading of the familiar *Valse triste* a bit etherialized—too silken textured.

—P.H.R.

STRAVINSKY: *L'Histoire du Soldat* (six sides); *Octet* (four sides). Members of the Boston Symphony Orchestra conducted by Leonard Bernstein. Victor set DM-1197, five discs, price \$7.25.

▲Listening to these records, I realized why *Histoire du Soldat* is relatively unpopular. The reasons have nothing to do with the music itself, for the score is one of the composer's best, and those of us who saw the performance conducted by Mitropoulos at Columbia University a few years ago remember it as utterly delightful. What militates against more performances is the medium Stravinsky has employed. *Histoire* is a little play with music. It uses a cast of four (including one female dancer); a narrator offstage recites the plot during the performance. The scoring calls for seven instruments—clarinet, bassoon, trombone, trumpet, percussion, violin and bass. It is so difficult that none but the best instrumentalists can play it properly. It is too intimate for a large theatre; professional groups would not be interested. Divorced from the accompanying action, the music has a tendency to sound drawn-out.

Seen and heard in its proper setting, though, *Histoire du Soldat* is a superb score—witty, ingenious, flowing, with acid harmonies and much melodic interest. The al-



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bum notes give most of the pertinent information, and they should be read carefully. Written at a period coinciding with the end of the first World War, *Histoire du Soldat* is a transitional work from the *Sacre* period—despite the slender instrumentation there are some reminiscences of the ballet—to the neo-classicism which was to follow.

The Octet, a short work, has three movements—Sinfonia, Tema con variazione, and finale. Here the scoring is for flute, clarinet, two bassoons, two trumpets and two trombones. In many respects the music is chip-on-the-shoulder Stravinsky: the defiant gesture of a young composer showing the world what could be done in a modern way with classic forms. An alert quality prevails; pert patterns are marshalled and the work moves swiftly along.

The recording of both pieces is superb. They were made in Tanglewood in August, 1947, and the album liner even gives the names of the men who were responsible: Richard Gilbert (recording director) and Fred Lynch (recording engineer). Easily as resonant, colorful and brilliant as anything put out by Decca or anybody else, the recorded sound is amazingly lifelike. Bernstein was lucky in that respect; he also was lucky in the Boston Symphony members who are the soloists here. They are all expert musicians who understand the music. The conductor does not have to prod them, and the result is an excellent album interpretively as well as from the standpoint of fidelity. —H.C.S.

WAGNER: *Parsifal—Prelude and Good Friday Spell*; The Boston Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Serge Koussevitzky. Victor set DM-1198, three discs, price \$4.75 (Manuel set \$5.75).

▲No one will deny that the Boston Symphony plays beautifully and that its tonal reproduction from these records is sumptuous. Yet, Koussevitzky's elegant and polished Wagner does not communicate to me the depth of meaning found in the older performances of Muck and Furtwaengler. The best Wagner reproductions, issued by Victor since the early Muck and pre-war Furtwaengler, have been those of Toscanini, and I, with others, feel that he should have been assigned this music for a new recording. The

fact that Toscanini's recording of the *Prelude to Die Meistersinger* won the critic's award this year is ample evidence of the high esteem in which his renditions of Wagner are held.

WEBER: *Invitation to the Dance, Op. 65*; The Philadelphia Orchestra, conducted by Eugene Ormandy. Columbia disc 12750-D, price \$1.25.

▲The absence of Berlioz's name on the label suggests another arranger, who—in my estimation—does not entirely erase memories of the famous Romantic. The strings of the orchestra are often silken textured and caressingly handled. The introduction and coda are proof. The beauty of the string playing is later disturbed by the bombastic treatment of the full orchestral sections, especially in the latter part of the piece where the music seems to me to be blown up somewhat pretentiously. Mr. Ormandy is more concerned with contrasts than the smoothest flow of the music; he varies its rhythmic pattern considerably. This new way of playing an old favorite does not appeal to me on first hearing, but my fondness for the Toscanini version has perhaps prejudiced me. The recording is well contrived, more glowingly textured on the low end than the high. —P.H.R.

## Concerto

MENDELSSOHN: *Concerto in E minor, Op. 64*; Mischa Elman (violin) with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Desire Defauw. Victor set DM-1196, price \$6.00 (Manuel set \$7.00).

▲Mendelssohn's concerto has long been associated with Elman in the concert hall. I first heard him play this work with Damrosch and his New York Symphony Orchestra, when he was in his middle twenties. The beauty and poignancy of his tone always served the music well but in the past a tendency to linger over phrases of sentiment and pathos often proved a distracting element to an otherwise admirable performance. The playing here introduces a new Elman to me, an artist who has grown in his musical perceptions and sensibilities. There is an emo-

tional poise and restraint but not at the sacrifice of the old ardor, brilliancy or facility of performance. Apparently, his many repetitions of this work in concert have not dimmed his enthusiasm, but instead made him more discerning in his discourse of the music. Not only the violinist's admirers but others will, I feel certain, applaud this evidenced maturity of his artistry.

Defauw handles his orchestra expertly and provides a cleanly articulated instrumental background, but he tends to be rather strident and somewhat lacking in finesse in this essentially serene and classic work. He lacks the sensitivity to make for the artistic compatibility found in the Szigeti-Beecham set, which I consider one of the most perfectly balanced concerto recordings. The spotlight, however, falls favorably on Elman.

—P.H.R.

### Chamber Music

**BRAHMS:** *Sonata in D minor, Op. 108*; Isaac Stern (violin) and Alexander Zakin (piano). Columbia set M or MM-730, three discs, price \$4.60.

▲ This is lovely music-making. The ease and assurance of the playing disperses knowledge that this is the most difficult of Brahms' violin and piano sonatas. The consistent beauty of Stern's tone is a joy to the ear, particularly since he avoids sentimentalism. He and his capable accompanist ritard recollections of all others except Szigeti and Petri (Columbia set 324). In my estimation, the older violinist's more personal absorption evinces greater maturity. Too, Petri's performance is more thoughtful and probing than Zakin's, yet, it should be said, the latter performs admirably, rightfully shaping his interpretation to conform to the violinist's. By adopting a slower tempo in the opening movement (marked *Allegro moderato*), Szigeti tellingly explores its poetic depths and in that wonderful development section he achieves greater dramatic intensity. Yet, Stern's treatment of this movement impresses for its lyrical graciousness and spontaneity. The poise and tranquillity, essential to the slow movement, is expressively conveyed by Stern and Zakin, and so too is the elfin delicacy of the scherzo. The symphonically propor-



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tioned finale is masterfully played, yet for all the strength of purpose the playing does not strike deeply or yield the fullness of the composer's dramatic implications. Despite critical observations, this is indeed lovely music-making. For this reason, I thoroughly enjoyed this performance which I shall gladly add it to my own collection.

The recording is tonally natural with an intimacy essential to the welfare of the music.

**HINDEMITH:** *Sonata for Viola d'amore and Piano, Op. 25, No. 2*; Milton Thomas and Sara Compinsky. Alco set AC 204, two discs, price \$3.50.

**HINDEMITH:** *Sonata for Cello Alone (Evenings on the Roof)*; Kurt Reher. Alco disc AR-101, price \$1.25.

▲Hindemith was an accomplished violist in his day, and equally proficient on the more complicated viola d'amore. It is a rich and dulcet-toned instrument which is heard far too seldom in modern times. It boasts fourteen strings, seven above and seven below the bridge. Those beneath are called "sympathetic strings" since they vibrate with the upper group in "sympathetic resonance". The composer has written a sonata exploiting the potentialities of the viola d'amore in a most persuasive manner. The thematic material throughout is appealing and the workmanship adroit. The short opening movement is based on a single melody, introduced by the piano in fugal style, and later freely developed by both instruments. The slow movement, the longest, is a threnody, evocative of the romanticism of the turn of the century, yet the spirit is modern. The composer's use of dissonance lends poignancy to its expression. The finale is bustling, a skillful weaving of several thematic patterns. This is an attractive and welcome work for the recorded library of chamber music.

The solo *Cello Sonata* is one of the most listenable works of its kind imaginable. It is both facile and songful, yet ingeniously exploits the resources of the instrument. The sub-title suggests a nocturne, and the warmly contemplative character of the musical writing is characteristic of the neo-romantic style which Hindemith utilizes in much of his later music.

It is good to hear modern music performed with such artistry and conviction. Miss Compinsky's clean, crisp piano play-

ing conforms to the contrapuntal patterns of the first sonata, and Mr. Thomas handles the viola d'amore expertly. The rich, warm tone of Mr. Reher's cello is well suited to Hindemith's music and contributes much to the aural enjoyment. There is good quality to the recording, especially in the tonal timbre of the string instruments.

**SUK:** *Un poco triste* and *Burleska* from *Four Pieces, Op. 17*; Ginette Neveu (violin) and Jean Neveu (piano). Victor disc 12-0154, price \$1.25.

▲In December, Victor brought out the first two pieces from Suk's *Opus 17* (disc 11-9840). At the time, we remarked that this second disc was missing, which contained one of the most attractive of the four pieces—the *Un poco triste*. Those who acquired the first disc will share our gratitude that Victor has released this one. Suk, who was Dvorak's, son-in-law, was more subjective than his father-in-law, and in the *Un poco triste* we have an example of this side of his nature. One might call these four pieces, musical cameos, expressing a sensitivity and melodic charm. Miss Neveu plays these little works superbly to the expert accompaniment of her brother. —P.H.R.

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## Keyboard

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**BACH:** *Prelude and Fugue in E flat (St. Anne)*; *Fugue in D minor*; *Fantasia and Fugue in G minor*; *Toccatina in F*; played by E. Power Biggs (organ). Columbia set MM-728, five discs, price \$7.10.

▲About halfway through the *G minor Fugue* my mind began to repeat over and over again "One and two and one and two and one and two and one and..." Biggs' metronomic pace sometimes has that effect. He is a good and sincere musician, certainly, and he has the fingers to carry him through the fugal complexities, but he also has a two-fold habit that robs the music of whatever color and line it possesses: his beat is too up-and-down, and once he falls into a dynamic plane he continues along with little variation.

Nor is Biggs notable for adventure in registration. All of this adds up to organ playing that is gray in color and not too

imaginative in conception. This is a personal viewpoint, of course, and others may disagree. Yet comparison of Biggs' ideas about the *F major Toccata* compared to Weinrich's (for Musicraft) tends to uphold that view. While Weinrich is more deliberate in his tempo, and plays an organ that is by no means as impressive in decibel count, at least the lines emerge clearly, without the ponderous rumble that Biggs produces.

Columbia has done a good job with the recording, though. Biggs plays the baroque organ in St. Paul's Chapel of Columbia University, and considering the volume of sound that is produced there is little excess reverberation or shatter. If Columbia is about to embark on a program of organ recording, how about the Franck *Chorales* and Poulenc's *Organ Concerto*? —H.C.S.

**LECUONA:** *Malaguena; Danza Negra; Danza Lucumi; Andalucia; Aragonesa; Danza de los Naningos; La Comparsa*; The first Piano Quartet. Victor set C-41, three discs, price \$4.00.

**PAGANINI-LISZT:** *La Campanella*; and **BACH:** *Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring and Rejoice Beloved Christians* (Choral Preludes); The First Piano Quartet. Victor disc 12-0206, price \$1.25.

**PADEREWSKI:** *Minuet in G*; and **RACHMANINOFF:** *Prelude in C sharp minor, Op. 3, No. 2*; The First Quartet. Victor disc 12-0207, price \$1.25.

▲The ease of execution, coordination, and timing of the First Piano Quartet are almost uncanny. Their arrangements are free from ostentation and generally eminently musical, making their performances enjoyable and praiseworthy. Lecuona's music is well suited to this sort of treatment. The ensemble handles the rhythms deftly and obtains much pleasing tonal color.

The Liszt merits applause for its precision and virtuosity. That ineffably lovely Choral Prelude—*Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring*—is far too ethereal for this sort of treatment, and is played too fast. Its companion is better performed. In Paderewski and Rachmaninoff there is sound musicianship and admirable avoidance of the inflation one might expect from four pianos. Good recordings!

**LECUONA** (arr. Nash): *Malaguena*; and **FALLA** (arr. Kovacs): *Spanish Dance*

*No. 1*; Bartlett and Robertson (duo-pianists). Columbia 10-inch disc 17516-D, price \$1.00.

▲Smooth sailing! The balance and control are impeccable, but the temperament is elusive. I am reminded that the players are referred to as "the perfect example of 'married music'" and find myself wishing that the "common impulse and understanding" might be disturbed occasionally. However, the musical equanimity offers a valuable example to aspiring duo-pianists. Good recording. —P.G.

## Voice

**HANDEL:** *The Messiah*; Elsie Suddaby (soprano), Marjorie Thomas (contralto), Heddle Nash (tenor), Trevor Anthony (bass), the Luton Choral Society and Special Choir, the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra (with organ), conducted by Sir Thomas Beecham. Victor sets DM01194/95, price \$28.25.

▲Those who know the earlier set by Sir Thomas and found it a more satisfying performance than the Columbia, directed by Sargent, will be greatly interested in the present release. Those who purchased the Sargent may not think the more inspired treatment of Beecham sufficient reason for replacement. It is Sir Thomas who shines in this performance—subtly shaping the phrases, keeping the rhythm fluent, and controlling dynamic levels of solo singers, choruses, and orchestra. His is a more revealing imagination than Sargent's, and a more devotional treatment of the music. On the first record face, the conductor talks about the score and its performance. Part of this is quoted in the interview with him in this issue, and the difficulties of the recording are also outlined.

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The reproduction is good, but not as brilliant as in the Sargent set. It is clear, tonally clean and well balanced. The conductor's use of two types of chorus permit some intimate effects as well as overwhelmingly massive ones (the singing of the "Hallelujah" chorus creates this last effect after what has gone before). Neither of the two modern sets have ideal soloists, but the choruses are better. At least three of the soloists of Sir Thomas' early performance—Labbette, Brunskill and Williams—were more gifted singers. The exception was the tenor—Eisdell. Heddle Nash, in my estimation, is the best of three tenors employed in the different versions. Miss Suddaby has a light, pleasing voice, and her coloratura is cleaner than Miss Baillie's. Miss Thomas is tonally steadier than Miss Ripley but less incisive. Her diction is not always clear. Mr. Anthony has a rather light bass, but admirable vocal agility.

More will be written on this performance by Mr. Miller who is more familiar with the Handel style and tradition. Those who own the older version by Sir Thomas will unquestionably want this one, for the choruses are better balanced and clarified and the dynamic range is more sensitively obtained. Some may not wish to discard the old set entirely—certainly many of the solo selections remain unchallenged. A point in favor of this performance is the inclusion of sections usually deleted. —P.H.R.

**KERN:** *Why Do I Love You* from *Showboat*; and **COWARD:** *I'll See You Again* from *Bitter Sweet*; Dorothy Kirsten (soprano) and Robert Merrill (baritone) with Russ Case and his Orchestra. Victor 10-inch disc 10-1398, price \$1.00.

▲The singing here is relaxed and ingratiating. —J.N.

**MASCAGNI:** *L'Amico Fritz—Duetto della ciliegie* (3 sides) and *Intermezzo—Act III*; Pia Tassinari (soprano) and Ferruccio Tagliavini (tenor) with E.I.A.R. Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Pietro Mascagni. Cetra-Soria set 105, price \$4.50.

▲In *L'Amico Fritz*, Mascagni turned to lyric drama. This gracious and tuneful opera is based on a simple and sentimental story lacking in dramatic action. It has maintained

public interest best in the land of its birth. Presented twice at the Metropolitan, once in 1894 for Calve and later in 1923 for Bori, it failed to captivate here. Some of Tassinari's and Tagliavini's finest singing on records is found in the complete *L'Amico Fritz*. It was while singing opposite each other at the Palermo Opera in 1940 in this opera that Tassinari and Tagliavini first met. Their marriage took place shortly afterward, and we assume the sentiment of this music had special meaning for them since they sing it so well. It was artful of domestic Cetra to select the charming *Cherry Duet* from the complete operatic set and make it available together with the popular *Intermezzo* from the third act in a separate album.

The duet occurs in the garden of Susel's father whom Fritz has come to visit. Susel is picking flowers and cherries to present to their landlord. She and Fritz laugh and joke together. Susel climbs a tree and throws down cherries at Fritz who finds it hard to decide whether they or her lips are the redder. Fritz, a confirmed bachelor, has fallen in love.

The composer, who directed this performance shortly before his death in 1945, conducts the orchestra with an affectionate hand. The recording is excellently accomplished.

—J.N.

**MENOTTI:** *The Medium* (7 discs), and *The Telephone* (3 discs); Evelyn Keller, Marie Powers, Beverly Dame, Catherine Mastice, Frank Rogier and Marilyn Cotlow, with orchestra, conducted by Emanuel Balaban. Columbia set M or MM-726, two volumes, price \$14.70.

▲Menotti has the distinction of having written the first American operas which have played repeatedly to capacity houses. The success of these works is not surprising since they offered a most satisfying experience in the theater imaginable. I am convinced that no legitimate opera company could gather a group so eminently suited to the individual parts, especially Marie Powers as the Medium. As the true singing actress, she tellingly employs her voice to accentuate the drama. Evelyn Keller, as the Medium's daughter, is also wholly persuasive in the sympathetic portrayal of her role.

These Menotti librettos are in prose, and



reveal a strong sense of the theater. The more one hears these scores, the more one is impressed with his rare skill for synchronization of sound to the word. The music is always spontaneous, inseparable from the action. There are moments reminiscent of Donizetti, Wolf-Ferrari and Puccini, but these, I suspect are merely subconscious distillations of other styles, which have served the composer to advantage in the development of his own style and individuality. *The Telephone* is opera-buffa, a satirical and highly amusing piece. It deals with a young man whose girl constantly chattering on the telephone, defeats his efforts to propose marriage. In desperation he goes to the corner drugstore to use the offending instrument to attain his objective. *The Medium* is melodrama—a moving and absorbing tragedy. A woman, who ignominiously uses her daughter and a young mute to practise her fraudulent demonstrations, is ensnared in her own trickery. Imagining the spirits have turned on her, her terror leads to tragedy. The dramatic impact of Menotti's musical description stimulates the imagination and I feel certain both scores will become more and more impressive through repeated hearings.

All participants deserve the highest praise. The orchestra is competently handled by Mr. Balaban—a newcomer to me. The recording is realistic.

**MOZART:** *Mentre ti lascio, o figlia*, K. 513; *Un bacio di mano*, K. 541; *Per questa bella mano*, K. 812; *Così dunque tradisci*, K. 432; *Rivolgete a lui lo sguardo*, K. 584; *Alcandro, lo confesso*, K. 512; Italo Tajo (basso) with Symphony Orchestra of the Italian Radio, conducted by Mario Rossi. Cetra-Sorria set 104, three discs, price \$6.25.

▲Among Italy's younger singers, Italo Tajo has gained in a very short time a rivaled International reputation. Following the war, Fritz Busch invited him to England's Glyndebourne Festival and in the fall of 1946 he made his debut in this country with the Chicago Opera Company. Before this he appeared with success in the leading opera houses of Italy. As long ago as the early Occupation, correspondents wrote to me about his rich and mellow voice. He sings smoothly and easily, and judging from these

records he is a versatile and highly competent artist. These six arias by Mozart, some of which were intended for concert use and others for insertion into operas by Italian contemporaries, are fine examples of his dramatic style. They range emotionally from the earnest and somber *Mentre ti lascio, o figlia* (the only one previously recorded), to the spirited buffa air, *Rivolgete a lui lo sguardo*. The latter was originally intended for Guglielmo in *Così fan Tutte*, but later replaced with the aria, *Non siate ritrosi*. A diverting novelty is *Per questa bella mano*, which was written originally with a contrabass obbligato, performed here with the more resilient cello. The text, a declaration of love, is more suitable in Einstein's thinking to a tenor. However, Tajo sings this air most expressively and one feels it would have ideally suited the noted Don Giovanni.

The orchestral direction of Mr. Rossi is competent and the recording is well balanced and natural in quality. The surfaces of the records are good. —P.H.R.

**OPERATIC ARIAS:** *Rigoletto—Recitativo e Parmi veder le lagrime* (Verdi); *L'Elisir d'Amore—Una furtiva lagrima* (Donizetti); *L'Africana—O paradiso* (Meyerbeer); *L'Arlesiana—Lamento di Federico* (Cilea); Ferruccio Tagliavini (tenor) with RCA Victor Orchestra, conducted by Antal Dorati. Victor set MO-1191, two shellac discs, price \$3.50 or VO-13, plastic, price \$5.00.

▲Tagliavini being the tenor of the hour becomes, like many of his famous predecessors, a Red Seal artist. His debut on domestic records is not without some ostentation. His set is available in plastic and shellac, and the cover of the album bears the tenor's signature. The voice has grown in power since the singer made his Italian recordings for Cetra. In many ways, Tagliavini's artistry is more admirable since the sobs and

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gasps in which he indulged in his Cetra discs are now avoided. I find his most persuasive singing in *Rigoletto*. It is more virile and he does not strive for excessive power as in his *O paradiso* and *Una furtiva lagrima*. While his pianissimo singing can be ingratiating, its sweetness often palls as in the Donizetti and the Cilea. The contrasts of vocal quality in *Una furtiva lagrima* and *O paradiso*—soft dulcet singing and sudden swells of power—are far too great, and the tenor's full tones frequently become strident and lacking in the vocal coloring of his softer ones, which gives the impression of two different singers. Tagliavini's ability to impart his joy in singing to others is, I believe, one of the chief reasons for his popularity. He has the enthusiasm of youth and an unmistakable love for his art, all of which is conveyed in these recordings.

The orchestral direction of Dorati no more than suffices. The recording is realistic. Curiously, the wonderful orchestral effect that Weissmann attained behind Peerce in his delivery of the Meyerbeer aria is missing here. That orchestral radiance and Peerce's more masculine singing make his disc one of the most desirable of this aria.

SCHUBERT: *Ave Maria*, and *Serenade* (in English); James Melton (tenor) with RCA Victor Orchestra, conducted by Frank Black. Victor disc 12-0153, price \$1.25.

▲The *Ave Maria* seems over-amplified and the tenor does not relax to its devotional qualities. Too, the orchestral background crowds the voice on occasion and the whole thing lacks intimacy. Mr. Melton is over-concerned with his diction in the *Serenade*. His pronunciation of the word "dearest" is a new one for me. After Miss Maynor's simply sung *Serenade* last month, this performance is pretentious and a bit too sentimental.

—J.N.

SCHUMANN: *Melancholie*, Op. 74, no. 6; *Er ist's*, Op. 79, no. 23; *Zwei Lieder der Braut*, Op. 25, no. 11 and 12; *Der Sandmann*, Op. 79, no. 12; *In's Freie*, Op. 89, no. 5; *Der Himmel hat eine Traene geweint*, Op. 37, no. 1; *Lust der Sturmnacht*, Op. 35, no. 1; *My Soul Is Dark*, Op. 25, no. 15; *Jephtha's Daughter*, Op. 95, no. 1; *Sun of the Sleepless*, Op. 95, no. 2; *Thy*

*Days Are Done*, Op. 95, no. 3. Blanche Thebom, mezzo-soprano; William Hughes, piano; Laura Newell, harp. Victor MO-1187, four 10-inch discs, price \$4.00.

▲The Peters Edition of the complete songs of Robert Schumann is published in three volumes. Everyone knows the contents of the first of these—the great cycles, *Dichterliebe*, *Frauenliebe und Leben*, *Myrthen* and the Eichendorff *Liederkreis* as well as a handful of independent songs—but Volumes 2 and 3 are rare (I have been vainly trying to buy copies of them for years) and their contents little known. Other Schumann collections, too, generally center around the same celebrated songs. We have been told by some authorities that while Robert was courting Clara he produced a flood of *Lieder* masterpieces, but that after he had won his bride he was never again able to capture the inspiration. It is easy to take this for a fact when the later songs are so inaccessible. Is it any wonder that few of us have taken the trouble to challenge the verdict?

Let us therefore thank Miss Thebom for her enterprise in exploring the field, and now making this unacknowledged collection available to us. Only three of her selections are to be found in Volume 1—the two *Lieder der Braut* and *Mein Herz ist schwer*—and even these are generally overlooked since no one ever presents *Myrthen* as a cycle. *Er ist's*, from Volume 2, gets an occasional hearing (it has been beautifully recorded by Elisabeth Schumann) though it generally has to yield place to Wolf's exuberant setting of the same Moerike poem. There is sufficient variety in the rest of the songs here presented to suggest a re-evaluation; and there is plenty of fine craftsmanship and musical interest to lead us on.

In making up her program Miss Thebom followed out two ideas which seem at first glance to be extremely intelligent and logical. Presenting four settings of Byron's *Hebrew Melodies*, she has elected to sing them in English, which is possible with very few minor alterations in the original poems, though of course Schumann set them to German translations. And since the nature of the poetry prompted Schumann to write harp-like piano parts, the singer has engaged the services of Miss Laura Newell to play them in transcription. This all sounds most

promising, yet I am not convinced that it was well advised. As for the English, though it adjusts itself to the music, it does not do so quite naturally. Indeed in some places it is downright clumsy. Too, for the harp, perhaps its greatest shortcoming is the lack of the fullness and sustaining power which are as much a part of Schumann's piano writing as its *arpeggios*. Consequently the performances of these four songs seem rather less than complete.

For the rest, suffice it to say that each of the selections was well worth doing. In at least one case I have long wondered why so grateful a song has been consistently neglected. The obvious answer is that *Der Himmel hat eine Traene geweint* is an inordinately difficult song to sustain.

And now having paid my homage to the composer, I must risk the charge of ingratitude, and admit that I do not find in Miss Thebom (whose voice and style I have long admired in operatic music) the ideal *lieder* singer. This is not to say that she does not have the capacity to develop along these lines, for she is beyond question one of the most richly endowed of our younger artists. At present she seems a little embarrassed by the intimacy of this kind of music. Her soft singing is not quite firm and, oddly, in the bigger songs, such as *Melancholie*, her vocal line lacks the essential breadth. To qualify this statement, *Lust der Sturmnacht* is better in the latter respect, and with the rhythm of the words to help her, *Der Sandmann* is winningly light and lovely. The recorded balance with the excellent Mr. Hughes is very good; if the singer overwhelms the harp, that is, I suppose, in the nature of things.

—P.L.M.

WAGNER: *Die Walkure*—Wotan's Farewell and Magic Fire Music (sung in German): Paul Schoeffler (bass-baritone) with the London Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Karl Rankl. Decca set EDA-46, two discs, price \$5.00.

▲Schoeffler appeared in London with the Vienna State Opera Company and received laudable criticisms for his singing of Don Alfonso in *Così fan Tutte*. He is a fine Wotan, sympathetic and authoritative, despite an occasional wobble. The balance between the orchestra and voice is effectively realized, yet there are moments when clarity is lacking and the strings are not always as

glowingly lustrous as they could have been. Rankl knows his Wagner and conducts with style, but seems to miss here an essential incisiveness which others bring to this music. However, the overall effect with the glowing sound of the reproduction is impressive and gratifying, but I suggest readers hear this set before buying.

—J.N.

## New Heritage Series

MASSENET: *Herodiade*—*Vision fugitive*, and *Le Roi de Lahore*—*Promesse de mon avenir*; Maurice Renaud (baritone). Victor disc 15-1021, price \$2.50.

VERDI: *Don Carlos*—*O don fatale*; and HARRIS: *The Hills of Skye*; Janet Spencer (contralto). Victor disc 12-1022, price \$2.50.

DONIZETT: *Don Pasquale*—*So anch'io la virtù magica*; and VERDI: *Rigoletto*—*Tutte le feste al tempio*; Olympia Boronat (soprano). Victor disc 15-1023, price \$2.50.

THOMAS: *Mignon*—*Addio Mignon, fa core*; and VERDI: *La Traviata*—*Dei miei bollenti spiriti*; Fernando DeLucia (tenor). Victor disc 12-1024, price \$2.50.

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VERDI: *Aida*—*Gia e sacerdoti adunansi*, Act IV, Sc. I; Louise Homer (contralto) and Enrico Caruso (tenor). Victor disc 15-1025, price \$2.50.

▲Renaud (1861-1933) was one of the great singing actors of his day. His voice was full and rich, and his style noble and fervent. In *Vision fugitive*, the singer's dramatic gifts are revealed and the ability he possessed for vital characterization. The other aria is sympathetically sung. This is a record that belongs in the collection of great vocal art. The baritone made these selections in 1906.

There is little data extant on the contralto, Janet Spencer. She was born in Boston where she began her studies, completing them later in London and Paris. She first attained fame around the turn of the century as a concert and oratorio singer. Her operatic aria is disappointing, lacking in dramatic conviction and requisite high tones, but her singing of the Harris song is more persuasive. The singer made these records in 1911.

Olympia Boronat (née 1859) is said to have been the daughter of a more famous singer. Her greatest fame was in Russia, where she sang with Battistini when he visited Warsaw. Later, she sang in Italy with some success. Whether she was of Spanish or Italian extraction has not been established, since very scant information about her is available. Her voice is light in texture but tonally sweet and her musicianship fastidious. Judging from her *Don Pasquale* excerpt, she must have been a charming Norina, and her singing of the Rigoletto aria reveals dramatic poignancy. Her clean coloratura work recommends her recordings which were made in 1908.

Fernando DeLucia (1860-1925) began as a lyric tenor. Later, he became a dramatic artist—a famous interpreter of Turiddu and Canio. He sang the first American performance of the latter role with Melba as Nedda. Apparently the tenor found the dramatic roles a strain on his voice because by the time he came to recording in 1903, he had resumed his earlier style of singing. His extraordinary flexibility of voice made him ideal in such roles as the Count in *The Barber of Seville*, and since his recording of *Ecco ridente* is regarded by many as a marvelous *tour de force* it should have been chosen instead of his dull performance of the Mignon

aria. His *Traviata*, on the other hand, is well sung with fine style. DeLucia's often excessive vibrato has long been a subject for argument among record buyers. These recordings were made in 1906.

Homer's voice is rich, full and beautiful in quality in this duet she made with Caruso in 1910. Both singers were at the height of their careers and they did notable justice to one of the best scenes from Verdi's *Aida*.

## Book Reviews

(Continued from page 234)

The new edition contains 469 pages of vocal listings, over a page of "talking records", and 5 pages of instrumental recordings. There is also a Foreword in which the author outlines his book, and offers hope that two additional catalogues will be forthcoming—one giving listings of lateral-cut discs from 1909 (the point where this one stops) to 1925 (the end of the acoustic era), and the other giving listings of cylinders and vertical-cut discs which are not included in the present volume. Of special value to the inexperienced collector are the two pages of concise information describing early label characteristics of Berliner, Gramophone (G & T), International Zonophone, Columbia, Victor, Fonotipia and Odeon discs.

The main body of the book closely follow the form established in the 1937 edition, except that in this edition the artists are listed in strict alphabetical order, facilitating its use. Under each singer's name, the records are listed in numerical and chronological order. Another feature is a key utilizing the first eleven letters of the alphabet to provide helpful bits of information. The letter "g", for example, indicates that the artist is "known to have made Edison cylinders", while the letter "j" means "he is known to have made electrical recordings", etc. Worth noting is a system in which the domestic and European recordings of both Victor and Gramophone are listed. This adds to the value of the book.

Probably no catalogue of old records could ever be absolutely complete, or even free from errors, and *Historical Records* is no exception. This the author frankly admits, calling on collectors for their continued cooperation in submitting additions and corrections for future editions. Meanwhile, as we survey the present work, we note here and there an omission that might have been avoided had we been more faithful in our cooperation while the revision was being made. To be sure, there are many errors, but when you consider them in relation to the total content of the book, they seem rather insignificant. The mistakes which I have noticed, or have had called to my attention, are not of great importance. Disregarding the numberless difficulties which beset its various compilers, *Historical Records* can surely be regarded as a remarkable achievement.

—Stephen Fasset

**RECORDS FOR PLEASURE.** By John Ball, Jr., Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick, N.J. 214 pp. Price \$2.50.

● Mr. Ball has written a comprehensive little volume on how to test, purchase and store records with recommendations for needles, machines, cabinets, methods for storing and cataloguing, with lists of dealers and periodicals. His aim apparently was an encyclopedic treatise for record buyers which he successfully achieves, though the manner in which he offers his information is at times patronizing and pedantic. Too, his method and approach to record collecting does not always suggest pleasure. For my own part, I prefer a jauntier and blither attitude toward any hobby. To have to be on guard against ten little gremlins each time one purchased a record would for me minimize the enjoyment.

Some of Mr. Ball's material is not unfamiliar. His recommendation to test the Columbia recording of *Zampa Overture* follows the suggestions outlined by John M. Raynor in an article which appeared in our September 1946 issue.

—J.C.M.

## In The Popular Vein

by Enzo Archetti

*Experience and Strangers In the Dark*; Beryl Davis, with Russ Case and His Orchestra. Victor 20-2685.

● Miss Davis upholds the good impression she made in last month's London release, though the material is not up to the same level. *Strangers* would have sounded much better in the original language; English is a misfit here. Russ Case gives good support and so does Victor's engineers.

*El Cumbanchero*—Conga and *Made For Each Other*; Desi Arnaz and His Orchestra. Vocals by Desi Arnaz. Victor 20-2550.

● Very vigorous, even a bit crude for Desi. Not quite up to the best he has done but still exciting. Excellent for dancing. Recording, very loud.

*Where Do You Work—a John and An Old Sombbrero*; Phil Brito, with Ted Dale and Orchestra. Musicraft 531.

● No one can accuse Phil Brito of being in a rut. Last month, Gounod's *Ave Maria*. This month, *Where Do You Work—a John*. In this, he is trying too hard to be funny. He is much better on the reverse.

*Lone Star Moon and Now Is The Hour*; Musicraft 532. *My Rancho Rio Grande and Two Loves*; Musicraft 522. *Carioca and Let's Be Sweethearts Again*; Musicraft 523. Shep

Fields and His Orchestra. Vocals by Toni Arden and Bob Johnstone.

● Shep Fields is back in the limelight again with some smoothly paced numbers. The rippling rhythm business, though, has been soft-pedaled. All to the good, too. In fact, only on the first disc listed is the orchestra called the "Rippling Rhythm Orchestra" although there is evidence of the style on all sides.

*Now Is the Hour*, the *Maori Farewell Song* in modern dress, is quite Chopinesque. *Carioca* is all-orchestral and smartly paced. Two are just plain tripe, even though neatly played, and two have cowboy overtones. Not an unpleasant way to spend 20 minutes of listening. The recording is very good but it's difficult to tell the quality of the surfaces from these review copies.

*I'm Looking Over A Four Leaf Clover and Mary Lou*; King Odom Quartet with The Polka Dots. Musicraft 543.

● *Clover* is the most popular revival of the moment and it's headed for the top of the Hit Parade. This version may not help to put it there but it's different. The harmonica band support is good. *Mary Lou*, too, is in the same vein. In fact, it's better than its companion piece.

*Girls In Jazz*; Victor Album HJ-11, 4-10" discs.

● The girls here get one of those rare opportunities to disprove the common belief that they can't play jazz. Except for the Sweethearts of Rhythm, none of the five groups represented in this album had ever played together before this recording session, especially arranged by Leonard Feather. And once again, they prove that, given a proper chance, sex has nothing to do with playing good jazz.

Outstanding, of course, is Mary Lou Williams who long ago carved her own niche in jazz

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with Andy Kirk, Duke Ellington, Benny Goodman, and others. Here she leads the Mary Lou Williams' Girl Stars (consisting of Mary Osborne, guitar; Margie Hyams, vibraharp; Jume M. Rotenberg, bass; Rose Gottesman, drums; and, of course, herself on piano) through *Boogie Misterioso* and *Hesitation Boogie*. Boogie being her forte, it is not surprising that these are top performances, especially *Hesitation Boogie*, which is the outstanding number in the album. The rest of the girls back her good work effectively.

Next in line come the Sweethearts of Rhythm. For real drive and swing, this group nearly outshines Williams', failing to top them only for slightly less originality. This is an interracial group, consisting of colored, white, Chinese, and Puerto Rican girls. Their techniques fit like the five fingers of a glove. In both *Vi Vigor* and *Don't Get It Twisted* we hear some outstanding work especially by Violet Burnside on tenor sax, Tex Stansbery on trumpet, and Jackie King on piano.

The Vivien Garry Quintet featuring Ginger Smock on a bodiless electric violin, and supported by Vivien Garry on bass, Edna Williams on trumpet, Wini Beatty on piano, and Dody Jeshke on drums contributes *A Woman's Place Is In the Groove and Body and Soul*. The technique and rhythm are splendid.

Least interesting is the Beryl Booker Trio (Booker, piano; Mary Osborne, guitar; and Jume Rotenberg, bass) heard in *Low Ceiling* and *Don't Blame Me*. Maybe, it's a question of getting better acquainted with Beryl's piano style for certainly the support she gets is expert and telling.

On the whole, a fine album, but let's admit not as exciting as some made by male jazz players. Worthwhile, however!

**Gypsy Nights;** Jascha Datsko and His Gypsy Ensemble. Capitol Album CD-42, 4-10" discs.

●A fascinating collection of Gypsy airs, both traditional and composed, from six countries. However, except for the introduction of characteristic national instruments, such as the cymbalom in *Erik a Buzakalasz*, the reed pipe in *Sirba*, and the guitars in *Two Guitars*, they are played with pretty much of a sameness as if for a tea room audience. Russia is represented with *Troika Bells*, *Song of the Plains* (Meadowland), and *Two Guitars*; Spain by *Granadinas* and *Clavelitos*; Greece by *Vlacha*; Hungary by *Erik a Buzakalasz*; Roumania by *Sirba*; and Turkey by *Turkish Street Song*. The reproduction and surfaces are excellent.

**Love Notes From Andy Russell;** Andy Russell with Dean Elliott and His Orchestra. Capitol Album CD-68, 4-10" discs.

●Andy makes a bid for the girls' collective hearts, and Sinatra's crown at the same time, and succeeds very well. His rendering of these sentimental love songs is excellent. He gives them just the right touch of sentiment and feeling. Moreover, he sings them tastefully,

not blatantly. His collection of songs is well chosen, all top-notchers of their kind. There is *Dearly Beloved*; *Did I Remember*; *Don't Blame Me*; *Yours (Quiereme Mucho)*; *Too Marvelous For Words*; *Goodnight, My Love*; *Paradise*; and *The Very Thought of You*. And to round out the good report, Capitol has done a good job of recording.

**Waltzing With Romberg;** Sigmund Romberg and His Orchestra. Victor M-1154, 4-10" discs.

●The Romberg style of playing is now quite familiar through his many radio programs. It is pleasant and enjoyable, though quite wooden. This album is typical. It contains some fine Viennese waltzes by Strauss, Ziehrer, and Lehár—as well as waltzes from several of his own operettas—but somehow, they all sound alike. They lack that characteristic lilt which makes a Viennese waltz so charmingly different from all other waltzes.

**Busy Fingers;** The Three Suns. Victor Album P-206, 4-10" discs. *There's A Music Box In The Moon and La Rosita*; The Three Suns. Vocals by The Sun Maids and Artie Dunn, Victor 20-2723.

●The album is a distinct departure for The Three Suns. It is all instrumental and it exploits the unique technique of this group to the hilt with a program of numbers made up entirely of piano show pieces, arranged for the instruments of this trio. The pieces are syncopated salon music of the Zé Confrey *Dizzy Fingers* type and, appropriately enough, this is one of the numbers in the program. All eight sides are worth hearing. The single returns to the more familiar formula which has made the Three Suns famous.

**Nowhere and Pagan Ninny's Keep 'Er Goin' Stomp;** Red Ingle and The Natural Seven. Niccolo Piu, Noodnik guest violinist. Capitol 476. *Song of Indians* and *Them Durn Fool Things*; Red Ingle and The Natural Seven. Minnie Haw Haw, and Chief Red Eagle. Capitol B451. *Pearly Maude and Cigareetes*, *Whuskey*, and *Wild Women*; Red Ingle and The Natural Seven with vocals by Mlle. Fifi Y'Okum, Red Ingle, and The Might and Main Street Choral Society. Capitol 15045.

●Since the success of their *Timtayskun*, this group has been trying hard to hit the jackpot again. They haven't quite made it, although results here are really funny. All six sides are burlesques of something well-known. For instance, *Pagan Ninny's Keep 'Er Goin' Stomp* (subtitled *Perpetual Emotion*) is a take-off on Paganini's *Moto Perpetuo*, Op. 11, featuring violinist Noodnik with excruciating results. *Nowhere* is called "A Dreamy Twostep" based on *You Came Along* and *Them Durn Fool Things* (A Jovial Piece for Social Gatherings) makes fun of *These Foolish Things Remind Me of You* by making it into a skit about two old-timers reminiscing about their youth and winding up in a spat. Rimsky-Korsakov's *Song of*



India takes a beating in *Song of Indians*. *Parlez-moi d'amour* and Lucienne Boyer take a ribbing in *Pearly Maude* (Three-Quarter Time à la Française) and American Westerns in *Cigarettes*, etc. This last is called *Outdoor Chamber Music*. Nothing very subtle, or even very whacky in the Spike Jones' manner, but funny just the same.

*Throw A Saddle On A Star*; Ozie Waters and The Plainsmen. *New San Antonio Rose*; The Plainsmen. Coast 227.

●A new singing cowboy and a new brand of records. Both very good. Waters has a good baritone and appropriate style. The first song may prove to be a bit of its kind. The reverse is all instrumental by a good group which seems to know the Spade Cooley manner. Recording is first rate.

*Hawaiian Cowboy and Make Believe Cowboy*; Roy Rogers, with County Washburne and His Orchestra. Victor 20-2604.

●The King of the Cowboys branches out a bit into comedies and parodies with not too auspicious results.

*Dream Girl and I Have Only Myself To Blame*; Phil Brito with Ted Dale and Orchestra. Musicraft 540. *Dream Girl and I'll Always Be In Love With You*; Freddie Stewart with Orchestra conducted by Buddy Cole. Capitol 494.

●Both smooth as silk. It would be hard to decide which is better—if you had to choose. Right now, I feel Freddie Stewart has a slight edge because his reverse is so much better than Brito's flipover. But the two *Dream Girls* are toss-ups.

*For Every Man There's A Woman and Beyond the Sea (La Mer)*; Benny Goodman and His Orchestra. Vocal by Peggy Lee on the first side only. Capitol 15030.

*For Every Man There's A Woman and What's Good About Goodbye*; Tony Martin with Earle Hagen and His Orchestra. Victor 20-2689.

*For Every Man There's A Woman and I'll Make Up For Everything*; Frank Sinatra with Orchestra under the direction of Axel Stordahl. Columbia 38089.

●An intriguing song for the thought expressed, this *For Every Man*. It's surprising how different the three versions are. Strangely, Sinatra is least satisfactory in a song which should have been a natural for him. The best, vocally, and especially for fine accompaniment, is Peggy Lee's but this isn't a woman's song. So, Tony Martin's remains. He comes out tops but not by a default because his is very well done.

The reverse sides of all three are first rate, all for different reasons. Women will swoon all over the place when they hear Sinatra's: it has that melting quality for which he is noted. Tony's is more straight-forward, though sentimental. Benny's is all instrumental, beautifully played. This is the Trenet piece about

which I wrote when it first appeared under the London label.

*Worry Worry Worry and That's A Plenty*; The Three Suns. Vocals in the first number only by the Sun Maids and Artie Dunn. Victor 20-2675.

*Worry Worry Worry and We Just Couldn't Say Goodbye*; Hal Derwin and His Orchestra. Vocal by Hal Derwin and The Hi-Liters. Capitol 498.

●Worry makes a good song which permits diverse treatment, judging from these versions. The Three Suns break away from the *Peg O' My Heart* formula and really do a first rate job. Hal Derwin comes up a poor second in spite of a good orchestra. But the real surprise is *That's A Plenty*. Now a classic rhythm number, The Three Suns really do it up brown as an all instrumental piece. Hear it. The reverse of Hal Derwin's doesn't come anywhere near it for interest or quality.

*The Geek and I've Only Myself To Blame*; The King Cole Trio Capitol 15036.

●Whatever a geek is, it makes good rhythm. It's one of those nonsense lyric thing the K.C.T. does to perfection. The reverse is more conventional fare.

*Swing Low Sweet Chariot and Sabre Dance* (Khachaturian); Woody Herman and His Orchestra. Vocal on the first side only by Mary Ann McCall. Columbia 38102.

*Swing Low, Sweet Clarinet and Purgatory*; Deep River Boys, with guitar, bass, and drums. Victor 20-2622.

●London issued the classic *Swing Low* to date by corraling Reginald Kell to play the clarinet part around which the whole piece is built. Both these versions, more rhythmic, may appeal more for that reason. The *Sabre Dance* is a masterpiece of savage, primitive rhythm and it loses none of its appeal by translating it into modern dance tempo. Except, in this version, Woody gets weak-kneed in the more lyric middle section and goes to pieces. It spoils the effect of the opening and finale. *Purgatory* is a rhythmic, hand-clapping sermon. A spiritual with plenty of pep.

*Wishing and Thoughtless*; Larry Green and His Orchestra. Vocal by The Trio. Victor 20-2714.

●Two neat if unsensational performances. The oldie still makes good listening.

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*Voco-Lovelies*; The Mullen Sisters, with Tony Mottola and His Orchestra. Victor Album P194, 4-10" discs.

●If you like vocal sister trios, you'll like this set. With me, a little can go a long way. There's plenty of variety, though: *Time On My Hands*, *Standin' In the Need of Prayer*, *Frenesi*, *The Moon of Manakoor*, *The Kerry Dance*, *Empty Saddles*, *Basin Street Blues*. The girls are certainly not in a rut. Inspiration must have run out on them because the last side in the album, *Carioca*, is played by Tony Mottola and his orchestra. Recording is first rate.

*St. Louis Blues March* and *Cherokee Canyon*; Victor 20-2722. *Stranger and Sweet* and *Beyond the Sea*; Victor 20-2691. Tex Beneke and His Orchestra. Vocals by Garry Stevens and Tex Beneke.

●The *St. Louis Blues* has been subjected to many arrangements and interpretations but this is probably the first time it has been done as a march—at least, on records. The result is splendid. Maybe it was done this way in the New Orleans parades we have read about in books about jazz. At any rate, Tex and his bunch do a bang up job with it. The reverse side sounds like a jazzed up Western. Not as interesting as the *Blues*, though well played. The other disc is in the romantic Beneke style. Smooth listening but not too imaginative. *Beyond the Sea* is Trenet's *La Mer* and it definitely loses its charm in English in spite of the good orchestral background.

*Springtime In Charleston* and *One Raindrop Doesn't Make A Shower*; Victor 20-2678.

*Who Are We To Say and Now Is the Hour*; Victor 20-2704. *You Were Meant For Me and I've Been A Good Girl*; Victor 20-2716. Charlie Spivak and His Orchestra. Vocal by Irene Day and Tony Mercer.

●The pace and pattern of the first four are the same. Except for *Now Is the Hour*, the music is inconsequential and it is good only for some smooth, effortless dancing, without too much concentration. In the remaining disc, the pattern is still the same but the pace is stepped up and so is the interest. They are typical Spivaks and there is plenty of open and muted sweet trumpet to satisfy all his fans. The recording is lifelike.

*Shaunty O'Shay and Little Lulu*; Victor 20-2673. *Big Brass Band From Brazil* and *The Secretary Song*; Victor 20-2710. Helen Carroll and The Satisfiers, with Russ Case and His Orchestra.

●The treatment of all four is the same as you have heard on the Chesterfield Program on the air many times. The humor is a little labored. The conga and *The Secretary Song* are best because the rhythm is better. Recording is very forward.

*Blue Hawaiian Rose* and *Feathery Feelin'*; Victor 20-2709. *Sabre Dance Boogie* and *After You've Gone*; Victor 20-2721. No

*Longer* and *You're Too Dangerous*, *Cherie*; Victor 20-2666. Freddy Martin and His Orchestra. Vocals by Stuart Wade, Glenn Hughes, Clyde Rogers, and The Martin Men. Piano soloist: Barclay Allen.

●At last, there is a batch of Freddy Martins about which one can get genuinely enthusiastic. He hasn't given up tampering with the classics but this time his boogie treatment of the *Sabre Dance* from Khachaturian's *Gayne Ballet* is not as incongruous as it reads. Most of the savagry of the original is retained in spite of the change in rhythm. And Barclay Allen's piano playing seems just right. The reverse, too, is really tops as an arrangement. It has bounce. Again Barclay Allen's piano plays a leading part. The other four sides, while not quite up to the same level, are, nevertheless, some of the best Freddy Martin has done for ages. *Blue Hawaiian Rose* may be genuine Hawaiian music but if it isn't, it's certainly an excellent imitation. *Feathery Feelin'* is a new Frank Loesser and it has the earmarks of another hit. The way Martin does it should help to make it so. Even the third disc, which isn't as good musically, has arrangements to recommend it. Congratulations!

*I Remember Mama* and *Tell Me Why*; Claude Thornhill and His Orchestra. Vocal by Fran Warren. Columbia 38075.

●A very disappointing Thornhill. The piano playing, which is usually the highlight of any Thornhill disc, is here aimless and unenthusiastic. *I Remember Mama* is Gabriel Marie's *La Cinquinaine* taken at a deathly slow pace and tricked out with a phony set of lyrics. A very obvious attempt to create another *Anniversary Song*.

*I Love and Carolyn*; Buddy Moreno and His Orchestra. Vocal by Buddy Moreno. Victor 20-2676.

●Moreno is a new name to discs, I believe, but this record is so good that we hope we'll see it often from now on. Both these numbers are first class performances, orchestrally and vocally. But good!

*Two Left Hands and Strollin'*; Freddie Slack and His Orchestra. Vocal by Charlotte Blackburn. Capitol 15035.

*Soothe Me and Lover*; Stan Kenton and His Orchestra. Vocal by June Christy. Capitol 15031.

●*Soothe Me* is a very slow number interspersed by some high trumpet passages which are curiously exciting. *Lover* is a fast, furious, and frenetic improvisation on a once poor innocent tune with again some of that exciting trumpet work Stan Kenton seems to be specializing in lately. Sterling work and exciting—but in a disquieting rather than in satisfying way.

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